Timeline of the Early Cold War

1945: February 4-11 - Yalta Conference
1945: August 6 - United States first used atomic bomb in war
1945: August 8 - Russia enters war against Japan
1945: August 14 - Japanese surrender End of World War II
1946: March - Winston Churchill delivers "Iron Curtain" Speech
1947: March - Truman announces Truman Doctrine
1947: June - Marshall Plan is announced
1948: February - Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia
1948: June 24 - Berlin Blockade begins
1949: July - NATO treaty ratified
1949: May 12 - Berlin Blockade ends
1949: September - Mao Zedong, a Communist, takes control of China
1949: September - Soviets explode first atomic bomb
1955: May – Warsaw Pact
Document A: The Iron Curtain Speech (Modified)

It is my duty, however, to place before you certain facts about the present position in Europe.

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia; all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject, in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and in some cases increasing measure of control from Moscow.

In a great number of countries, far from the Russian frontiers and throughout the world, Communist fifth columns are established and work in complete unity and absolute obedience to the directions they receive from the Communist center.

I do not believe that Soviet Russia desires war. What they desire is the fruits of war and the indefinite expansion of their power and doctrines.

But what we have to consider here today while time remains, is the permanent prevention of war and the establishment of conditions of freedom and democracy as rapidly as possible in all countries.

Source: Excerpt from the “Iron Curtain Speech” delivered by Winston Churchill, March 1946 in Fulton, Missouri.
Document B: The Truman Doctrine (Modified)

The United States has received from the Greek Government an urgent appeal for financial and economic assistance...Greece is in desperate need of financial and economic assistance to enable it to resume purchases of food, clothing, fuel, and seeds.

The very existence of the Greek state is today threatened by the terrorist activities of several thousand armed men, led by Communists, who defy the government's authority...Greece must have assistance if it is to become a self-supporting and self-respecting democracy. The United States must supply this assistance...No other nation is willing and able to provide the necessary support for a democratic Greek government.

One of the primary objectives of the foreign policy of the United States is the creation of conditions in which we and other nations will be able to work out a way of life free from coercion.

It is necessary only to glance at a map to realize that the survival and integrity of the Greek nation are of grave importance in a much wider situation. If Greece should fall under the control of an armed minority, the effect upon its neighbor, Turkey, would be immediate and serious. Confusion and disorder might well spread throughout the entire Middle East...Should we fail to aid Greece and Turkey in this fateful hour, the effect will be far reaching to the West as well as to the East.

The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms. If we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world. And we shall surely endanger the welfare of this nation.

Great responsibilities have been placed upon us by the swift movement of events.

Source: Excerpt from the “Truman Doctrine Speech,” delivered by President Truman to Congress on March 12, 1947.